

Golden Gate Transit Bus and Ferry Fare Media Transition Plan

July 14, 2009



In response to the direction of the TransLink Management Group (TMG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), the staff of the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District (District) has developed a proposed fare media transition plan that lays out the necessary steps, conditions, and time line for discontinuing paper pre-paid fare media as payment for utilizing Golden Gate Transit Bus and Golden Gate Ferry services. This staff proposed Plan follows the form defined in David Weir's memorandum to Design Review and Implementation Committee (DRAIC) of June 24 and Nathaniel Ford's June 12 letter to the General Manager of BART and the TransLink DRAIC and Finance Committee chairs.

1. Table of Prepaid Fare Media for Transition to TransLink

Golden Gate Transit Regional Bus

Product Name: Golden Gate Transit Value Cards

Value	Eligibility	Planned Transition Date
\$25.00	All	July 1, 2010
\$50.00	All	July 1, 2010
\$75.00	All	July 1, 2010

These are magnetic stripe cards that are pre-purchased for use on Golden Gate Transit Bus (GGT Bus). Cards are distributed by District (in person, by telephone and on-line) and third party vendors (in person). All buses are equipped with GFI Odyssey fare boxes with mag stripe card TriM and swipe readers. Transfer rules for all Value Cards: up to three free transfers allowed from three hours of first boarding for intra-county travel and from four hours of first boarding for inter-county travel. No free transfer to return in opposite direction on same route.

Golden Gate Transit Local Marin Bus

Golden Gate Transit provides local Marin County bus services for Marin Transit under an Agreement that identifies Marin Transit as the responsible agency for local fare policy. Marin Transit has chosen to provide prepaid fare media in the form of period passes: mag stripe 1 day, 7 day and 31 day passes and paper student flash passes for Marin County schools institutional program; and single ride tickets related to institutional programs: mag stripe and paper tickets for County Health & Human Services and paper tickets for Homeward Bound. The District also sells Value Cards in \$18 and \$36 denominations for local Marin County travel, which Marin Transit has requested not be transitioned to TransLink at this time. Transition of these fare media will require the independent action of Marin Transit.

Golden Gate Ferry

As of January 1, 2009, Golden Gate Ferry (GG Ferry) eliminated its Frequent Rider Ticket Books, which were a longstanding means for riders to obtain a discount for riding GG Ferry. After that date, to obtain the discount, riders were required to use TransLink on GG Ferry. With District's commitment to TransLink, as demonstrated by the elimination of GG Ferry Frequent

Rider Ticket Books, TransLink revenue collection and customer service operations have had some problems, which will be discussed in the later section on Transition Constraints.

2. Fare Media Transition Schedule

District staff proposes to transition GGT Bus Value Cards (except \$18 and \$36 denominations) by July 1, 2010.

3. Formal Board Policy Actions Required for Fare Media Transition

In accordance with the rules of the District's Board of Directors, elimination of existing prepaid fare media and replacement with TransLink cards requires Board action.

A public hearing would not be required, because elimination of prepaid fare media does not constitute a fare increase, since by current Board policy TransLink e-cash provides the same discount as the Value Cards.

The proposed Board action to discontinue mag stripe GGT Bus Value Cards would be timed by staff to occur before placing the final order of ticket stock for the Value Cards and to allow sufficient time for public notice, depletion of mag stripe card value and replacement with TransLink cards. The proposed date for Board action would likely be December 2009 for a July 1, 2010, implementation target.

4. Transition Constraints

Besides the procedural constraints internal to the District (obtaining Board approval, for example), there are a number of constraints to successful transition to TransLink related to District experience to-date with TransLink performance and customer satisfaction. The following issues should be addressed by TMG before TransLink becomes the exclusive pre-paid fare media for GG Ferry and GGT Bus.

- Increase the e-cash card limit to \$700. As Golden Gate Transit and Ferry fares continue to rise, the existing e-cash card limit of \$300 will not be able to accommodate our pre-paid customers. Commuters from Santa Rosa to San Francisco currently pay \$296/month in discounted fares, and effective July 1, 2010, that monthly rate will rise to \$310, exceeding the current e-cash maximum. As the monthly pre-tax commuter benefit has increased to \$230, the new card limit will provide needed flexibility to work with various employer programs; some Golden Gate patrons receive CommuterCheck benefits on a quarterly basis. As Golden Gate limits discounted, pre-paid travel to e-cash only, the TransLink system must accommodate the needs of our commuters before we can eliminate other pre-paid fare media. TransLink must maintain the ability to further increase the e-cash card limit in the future as transit fares continue to rise.
- Increase the add-value transaction limit to reflect the e-cash card limit. Current system constraints dictate that no more than \$250 can be added to a TransLink card in one transaction. This presents a customer service barrier for Golden Gate commuters who can use up to \$300 in e-cash value each month. In order to eliminate our pre-paid fare media, the customer service barrier presented by the add-value limitation must be removed. The add-value limit should mirror future changes to the e-cash card limit, i.e., the add-value limit should also be raised to \$700.
- Assure reliability. The District has experienced repeated failures with both Ticket Office Terminals and CID2A devices. The District's letter of June 18 addressed the need for

improved software testing, device monitoring, and issue resolution as key factors for an agency that is relying on TransLink as the only prepaid fare medium. The Ticket Office Terminals have experienced errors caused by static electricity generated when using the patron interface device, a problem that still has not been resolved at present. In addition, TOT functionality was impaired and patrons were unable to add value to their cards when the contractor released a software fix that had not been fully tested. Three times since revenue ready, all of the CID2A devices at one or more ferry terminals have failed during the peak commute hour, causing Golden Gate Ferry to allow TransLink patrons to ride for free. The District not only needs to see the TransLink consortium and the contractor continuing to work on resolving these issues, but requires tangible steps that will allow the District to avoid the most serious impacts of such failures. The introduction of a Handheld Card Reader with write capabilities (known as the Read/Write HCR) would provide fare collection redundancy and would allow fares to be collected in the event of a terminal-wide or systemwide CID2A failure.

- Improve the process for addressing chronic operational issues and implementing long-term system improvements. A rational, consistent process must be developed to address persistent operational issues and to prioritize system improvements in such a way that the maximum benefits to TransLink as a whole are achieved. The unresolved, ongoing static electricity issue with the TOT's demonstrates the shortcomings of the existing process.
- Pre-tax commuter benefits. Develop a clear and consistent message about how to use pre-tax commuter benefits. The wide range of practices and differing schedules of transit benefits providers can be an obstacle to customers who wish to use TransLink. The Consortium should counteract this situation with effective customer communication.
- Improve on-line access for customers to card-holder accounts. Customers require the ability to check their balance and their transaction history.
- Availability/Promotion. A recent MTC survey reported that the TransLink brand awareness has actually been on the decline. The District believes an ongoing program should be developed and implemented which would serve/promote the TransLink brand in underutilized and/or underserved markets, including a commitment to maintain a vendor network to support all customers, including those who may be unbanked, not have a credit card, or do not have computer access.
- Coordinate with Marin Transit. Current schedule for local Marin GGT Bus prepaid fare media to be transitioned by Marin Transit is in Phase 3. Since most GGT customers do not discern between District regional bus and Marin Transit local bus routes, there may be public confusion with elimination of existing regional pre-paid fare media without concurrent transition of Marin Transit pre-paid fare media. Some customers will continue to carry two methods of fare payment. The District will be unable to derive the greatest benefit from TransLink when local riders on our regional bus routes (about 25% of all riders) are likely to use Marin Transit fare media. Therefore, it is crucial that Marin Transit's adoption of TransLink come at the earliest opportunity.

5. District Contact

The District's contact for the Prepaid Fare Media Transition is Barbara Vincent, Senior Planner, who represents the District at DRAIC. She can be contacted at bvincent@goldengate.org or 415-257-4465.